

**Illinois Department on Aging
Solutions Event:
Older Americans Act Reauthorization**

July 6, 2005

**Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Springfield, Illinois**

Testimony

**By Julie Gowen, Corporate Board Member
East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging
Bloomington, Illinois**

Good morning everyone. My name is Julie Gowen. I represent McLean County on the Corporate Board of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

Since it was enacted in 1965, the Older Americans Act has provided federal guidance and support to help older Americans stay in their homes and communities with maximum dignity and independence for as long as possible. The Act established the national Aging Network which has served as the infrastructure for aging service delivery at the federal, state and local level. For over 30 years, Area Agencies on Aging and community programs have leveraged public and private resources to meet the needs and provide a better quality of life for millions of older adults.

Last year the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging awarded grants of federal Older Americans Act funds and Illinois General Revenue funds to 31 community programs which served over 25,000 older persons and 2,500 caregivers. In McLean County alone, Older Americans Act programs served over 3,300 older adults and 500 caregivers.

Continuing to provide quality services in Area 05 is a major challenge. The loss of nearly a quarter of a million dollars in federal and state funds in our 16-county area due to the designation of formerly rural counties as metropolitan has limited our capacity to maintain services. Compounding this problem is the aging of the baby boomers. Let's consider the changing demographics of my home county of McLean over the next decade, for example. The 2000 Census counted 150,433 total persons in McLean County including 19,048 persons 60 years of age and older (12.6% of the population). The 2000 Census also counted 5,885 persons ages 55 to 59 and 18,312 persons between the ages of 45 and 54. There are 24,197 persons in these two age cohorts comprising 16.1% of the population. In ten years the number of persons in McLean County entering their *third age* will **triple**. (These data don't reflect overall projected significant population increases over the next 10 to 20 years.)

We must expand public and private resources at every level to serve seniors today and to prepare our communities for the boomers to come. The reauthorization of the Older Americans Act provides is an ideal opportunity for Congress to ensure that the necessary system of services is in place to meet the needs of the current aging population as well as the needs of the baby boomers.

To help meet these goals, we support the following recommendations adopted by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging:

1. Increase federal authorization levels for Older Americans Act programs to enhance home and community-based services. To compensate for inflation and the rising costs of providing services, we recommend raising the authorized funding levels for all titles of the Act by at least 25% above the FY 2005 appropriated level, except for the Family Caregiver Support Program under Title III-E which should be authorized at \$250 million.

2. Help communities prepare to meet the demographic challenges ahead. To facilitate community preparedness we recommend adding a new title to the Older Americans Act. The new title would be a ten-year, sunsetted provision which would support Area Agencies on Aging in every Planning and Service Area in the nation to proactively prepare their communities for the aging of the baby boomers. These efforts would focus on developing the programs, policies and services needed to address the aging of the baby boomers and the increased longevity of the current population of older adults. For example, the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging is working with Illinois State University to apply Geographic Information System technology to help communities become “aging-ready.” ISU is creating a GIS map of McLean County identifying communities which are aging in place. The Area Agency on Aging will superimpose the location of current facilities and services for seniors to determine their accessibility and identify service gaps. With funds provided under this new title of the Older Americans Act, the Area Agency on Aging would be able to expand this project and create maps for all 16 counties in Area 05 as planning tools for our citizens and elected officials.
3. Strengthen the Aging Network as a Coordinated Point of Entry. We recommend a new title that will permanently establish Aging and Disability Resource Centers within every service area in the nation. The ADRC program is part of the President’s New Freedom Initiative, spearheaded through the Administration on Aging and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Illinois has received a three-year grant to develop ADRCs in Decatur and Rockford. On July 1, 2005, the Aging and Disability Resource Center will begin operations under the sponsorship of the Macon County Health Department in Decatur. The Center will be known as ***STARTING POINT – the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Macon County***. The Center will assist older adults and persons with physical disabilities to obtain information and options for supportive services.

The Macon County Health Department also serves as the Case Coordination Unit and Family Caregiver Resource Center for Macon County. These programs and services provide options for independence at tremendous savings. For example, the Macon County Health Department CCU estimates the cost of helping an older person to live in subsidized housing with supportive services in Decatur is \$1,490 per month or \$17,880 per year – significantly less than the cost of placement in a nursing home at \$2,700 per month or \$32,400 per year. Home and community-based services save Medicaid an estimated \$13,000 per client per year.

4. Strengthen the Aging Network's Role in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. We recommend an authorization level of \$50 million for the Title III-D program and propose that \$10 million of the appropriation be set aside to pilot, through the Area Agencies on Aging, a community collaborative between local aging and healthcare providers to promote disease prevention services. For example, the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging has worked with the Macon County Health Department to expand a medication management program which has had a significant impact on the lives of older adults and has led to significant cost-savings. Through a grant of Title III-D funds from our Agency, the Health Department now employs 2.5 full-time equivalent registered nurses to provide medication management services to 81 older adults in the community. The program has been particularly important to clients who require assistance in pre-filling insulin to manage diabetes. In addition, the program has improved clients' ability to monitor blood glucose and self-administered insulin injections, resulting in high client satisfaction, rave reviews from physicians, a reduction in hospital emergency room visits and a lower probability of nursing home placements resulting in significant cost savings to the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about our recommendations for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and the critical need to prepare for the aging of tomorrow.